

New London County Historical Society

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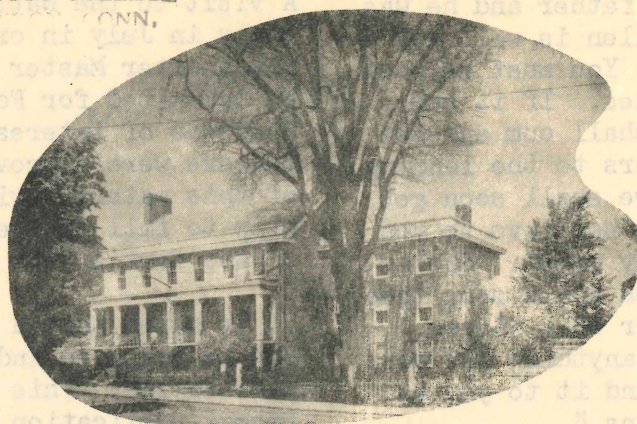
SHAW MANSION

New London, Conn.

STACKS

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SOCIETY RECEIVES PROMISE OF CHAIR FROM SHAW FAMILY DESCENDANT

The promise of a gift by Mr. Roger Nevins of Macon, Georgia, will bring another piece of Shaw furniture back to its former home. It is one of the eagle-back chairs which very probably were the dining chairs of the young Shaws. Two arm chairs of the set are already in the house, but this is the first of the side chairs to return. It opens up the pleasing thought that the dining room may one day be restored to more nearly its earlier appearance.

The chair is of mahogany of the transitional style between Chippendale and Hepplewhite. It has the plain tapered leg with square stretchers, and the ears at the top of the more familiar Chippendale style have become rudimentary. The back has a carved splat, the top form of which suggests a shield in which is centered a flat carved eagle with wings spread out and down. The seat has overlapping upholstery. These chairs might have been made any time during the second half of the eighteenth century.

It is easy to forget the long popularity of the eagle in the decorative arts, and to think that it sprang into prominence immediately following the Declaration of Independence. Nothing could be further from the truth. All through the ages the eagle was used in decoration, with a par-

ticular stress at each era of classicism. In the first half of the eighteenth century the eagle spread its wings on mirrors, clocks and tables, both in Europe and America. The fashion in Europe had somewhat died down by 1775, but the events of that year in the United States gave new impetus to the style, and it became nearly a trade mark on American manufactures.

The Shaw chairs lie somewhere between the first and second eagle periods and were perhaps made about 1770-1780. They may have been made in New London, or with Shaw's far-flung connections they may be of almost any origin. The monogrammed porcelain for Lucretia Shaw Woodbridge was ordered from China, some of the silver came off a privateer, Mrs. Shaw's umbrella was ordered from Martinique. What was to prevent the chairs being made to order from drawings sent to San Domingo under the eye of the agent there?

PEMBER CAULKINS LETTER PRESENTED BY MISS NEVINS

A letter written by Pember Caulkins to his step-grandsons, Nathaniel and Thomas S. Perkins, while they were at school in Plainfield has been presented to the Society by Miss Anna L. Nevins. This charming communication, dated at New London 27 December 1802, reads as follows:

"Masters Nath and Thomas S. Perkins, you ought to be severely reprimanded for not wrighting us before now, for we want

to hear from you very much. You must write us immediately on your receiving this and let us know how you are as to your health and whether you have read any letters from your father and how many. I have the pleasure to inform you that I read a letter from your father and he was well and Lucretia and Ellen is well and send their love to you. You must be good boys and mind your studies. If it comes good sailing perhaps I shall come and see you. You can send letters to the landing or to Mr. Fannings and we shall soon get them. Your Granma sends her love to you and wants to see you very much. She is well. I shall write you again soon then, from your friend and ever well wisher.

"N.B. If you want anything you must write to me & I will send it to you as soon as I can. P. Caulkins."

The tenderness expressed in this letter sheds a lovely light on a man whose career (sketched in the April Bulletin) suggests the stern business man. It is a valued addition to the Society's growing collection of Pember Caulkins material.

The Caulkins Portrait Fund totals \$500. at the time this issue of the Bulletin goes to press. Members who have planned to contribute but have not gotten around to it are reminded that \$1500. more is needed before this notable portrait by Ralph Earl can be purchased. Financial aid has been pledged by one foundation with the understanding that the major part of the purchase price will be subscribed by the membership and friends. So please give as much as you can now to bring this valuable portrait of Pember Caulkins back to New London where it belongs.

EARLY FORT TRUMBULL MATERIAL COPIED FROM NOTABLE COLLECTIONS

The cooperation of the Yale University Library and the National Archives and Records Service has made possible the addition to the Society's library of a great deal of valuable letter and account book information covering the late 18th and early 19th century history of Fort Trumbull.

Trips to New Haven have been made to inspect the Nathaniel and Thomas Shaw collection of New London material covering the Revolutionary period. The early account books listing items purchased for the construction of the fort in 1776, New London real estate transactions, and many

letters concerning the wide-flung shipping interests of the Shaws are being reviewed. Permission of the Yale authorities has been granted for the copying of material of interest.

A visit to the National Archives was made early in July in order that the files of the Quarter Master General's Office might be consulted for Fort Trumbull material. Hundreds of interesting and important letters were discovered. Copies of some of this material will be made and will help to fill in the gaps in local records of the fort's 19th century history.

It is hoped that a history of Fort Trumbull may be prepared and issued as a Society publication. This would mark the first formal publication of an organized illustrated history of New London's distinguished military post.

ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 21 SEPTEMBER

It's hard to realize that another year has nearly completed its course, and that the big event, the Annual Meeting, is only seven weeks away. Much planning remains to be completed. Your officers are working on a program. Their nets are out to capture a top-flight speaker. This meeting offers a splendid opportunity to present to those in attendance subjects that are important to us as members of a society pledged to collect, preserve and publish New London County historical and genealogical material. This obligation includes material of today as well as yesterday--- material that will provide the historical records for tomorrow's students.

Such items as space (or the lack of it), plumbing (inadequate as it is) and the ever-present weather with its temperamental outbursts appear small in the face of this opportunity to meet and talk and get to know each other a little better.

Details of time and place and program will be sent to you at the earliest possible moment. Meanwhile, please get out your red pencil and circle 21 September on your calendar.

CONNECTICUT LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

The 17 July meeting of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies in Woodbury conflicted with several notable events in the New London County area. The Mystic tercentenary parade and the Open House day in Old Lyme attracted many.

Your president, who was scheduled to speak at the Woodbury meeting, was unable to attend because of a last minute personal emergency. His place on the program was taken by Williams Haynes of Stonington. Mr. Haynes, who was a featured speaker at the recent Cooperstown, N. Y. seminars on the study and teaching of early American history, reviewed the meetings for the League membership. Miss Marjorie Case, head of the Local History and Genealogy section of the State Library, addressed the meeting on the use of these materials.

The League will meet on 16 October at New London. Plans are being made for an interesting program. The principal speaker is yet to be selected. The Society has the promise of Miss Hazel Johnson, Connecticut College librarian, to talk about the progress of the New London County Imprint Group. It is hoped that a member of the New London County Children's Museum will discuss the work of this valued project to date. We hope that you will make a special effort to attend this 16 October meeting at the Shaw Mansion. The Society will provide dessert and coffee.

IMPRINT GROUP ASKS FOR ENTRIES FOR UNION CATALOG

Space has been devoted in previous bulletins to the activities of the group of library and historical society workers who are compiling a list of New London County imprints. Since they started this project a year and a half ago, they have provided cards toward a union list that will show the location of all known copies of documents printed in New London County during the 18th and 19th centuries.

You would be amazed by the number of documents for which bibliographical descriptions have been prepared and sent to Connecticut College library which is headquarters for the group. Almanacs, broadsides, Bibles, hymnals, sermons, tracts, laws, manuals, directories, maps, ship's share papers, and even currency--- these early imprints have been discovered in all

sorts of places. Some of these items are quite unique---some have not been listed by the authorities on American imprints.

The Library of Congress has loaned its large collection of New London County entries assembled during its nation-wide local imprint survey during the years of the WPA. The local group's entries are carefully checked against this list by Miss Hazel Johnson and her staff at Connecticut College.

The group feels that many sources remain untapped. A careful survey of the documentary resources available to you in your home or in collections controlled by you may reveal a rare broadside or other item that has not yet been listed by others in the County.

Please feel free to call on the library or historical society representative who is nearest or most familiar to you for information about this project, and for details of the next meeting.

COMING AND GOING

A group of twenty visitors was given a tour of the Mansion on 1 July under the leadership of Dr. Albert Van Dusen, State Historian and member of the faculty of the University of Connecticut. This visit was part of a summer tour of historic places of New England, which is being taken by the students of Dr. Van Dusen's summer session at Storrs.

Miss Clark and Mrs. Holmes were on hand to contribute local color to the tour, which was apparently greatly enjoyed. These visitors were from many states. A glance at the Society's register shows that summer brings guests from far-off places.

The portrait of Rev. Eliphalet Adams, one of our earliest paintings, has been loaned for the month of August to the Little Compton, R. I. Historical Society. Its summer exhibition of pictures reflects the historical background of the town. The Rev. Mr. Adams was active in Little Compton church affairs in the late 17th century.

The Society welcomes letters from its membership. Please address your communications to the Secretary at the Shaw Mansion.

A SELECTION FROM RECENT
SOCIETY ACCESSIONS

Miss Alice Bishop
Civil War Quarter Master returns
Receipts and other early New London
papers

Mr. Lee Harwood, New York City
Framed Civil War record of Major-
General Joseph A. Mower

Miss Gertrude Palmer
Silver cake basket
Postcards and photographs of New London

Mr. Harold Pond
Candelabra from home of Charles Pond,
Governor of Conn., 1853-54
Pair of crystal vases

Mr. and Mrs. Gorton Rogers
Portrait of Ernest E. Rogers
Velvet jacket
Three handmade petticoats
White cotton afternoon gown
White satin slippers
Beaded pincushion

Mr. Henkle S. Scott
Set of 12 volumes by "Peter Parley"
and other books and early
newspapers.

DON'T MOVE

without letting us know your new address.
Send it along to the Secretary at the ad-
dress given below. We will gladly send
your copy of the Bulletin to you, where-
ever you are.

From The New London County Historical
Society, Shaw Mansion
11 Blinman Street
New London, Connecticut

Return Postage Guaranteed

Mr. Raymond J. Walker
Manuscript historical and biographic-
al material
Copies of magazines, books and other
material of New London interest

Mr. William Warren, Litchfield
Original Fort Trumbull letter dated 3
Nov 1821, signed A. McDowell.

Mrs. Paul R. Wright, San Diego, Cal.
Whalebone umbrella, formerly owned by
Deacon Matthew Minor, descendant
of early New London and Stoning-
ton settlers

Dow Chemical Company, Gales Ferry
Historical material concerning Dow
Company, and samples of plastic
granules

Electric Boat Division, General Dynamics
Corporation, Groton.
Souvenirs of USS Nautilus launching

Chas. Pfizer & Co., Groton
Booklet describing history of Groton
plant, and other literature

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US

The Society's phone is Gibson 3-1209
The Mansion is open daily except
Sunday from 1 to 4
Custodians in residence: Mr. and Mrs.
Sidney Holmes

*Miss Hazel A. Johnson
146 Mohegan Avenue
New London, Conn.*